

## Chapter 18 : “1943/72 – A citizen's daughter”

CG had a standard answer to all questions on when he intended to marry: It would happen before him turning 30 but with whom was his own business. The surroundings eventually stopped asking. They seem to have believed that he would remain a bachelor for life. Saturday, August 26, 1972, Munich, however, he met the Olympic hostess Silvia Renate Sommerlath. Then followed a long and for them both very stressful relationship that was on and off for almost four years. Everything ended happily however, with an engagement on March 12, 1976, and a wedding on June 19 the same year. CG was then 30 years and 49 days. The constitution required the bride be approved by the prime minister, at this time Olof Palme, but only if CG was still Crown Prince. As King, he could marry whoever he wanted. No one in a responsible position had therefore asked the question “who is she?”.

CG had never met anyone like Silvia before and was completely satisfied with what he saw which also came to apply to the Swedish people. In a Sifo survey before the engagement, 38 percent approved of Silvia. After the engagement, when people had seen her on TV, it was 70 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The low initial value seems to have been due to the difficulty to form an opinion from the weeklies if they were serious or if this was yet another short-term relationship.<sup>2</sup> On the press conference in conjunction with the engagement, CG was asked what he liked best about her. “That she's Silvia!”, he answered. Health, wit, beauty, strategic submission and cultural polish had carried the day. To check her credential felt to be *lèse-majesté*. Still it was done. Information about her self and her family has continued to trickle forth for more than 40 years. If you are a public person, it is unavoidable.<sup>3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13</sup>

There are three “official” biographies: Christina Magnergård Bjers “Drottning Silvia” (2001). Norbert Loh “Silvia von Schweden : eine deutsche Königin” (2003). Roger Lundgren “Drottning Silvia - en jubileumsbok” (2013). In addition, of course, a variety of photo books, newspaper clippings, radio and TV spots.

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<sup>1</sup> [Hans Zetterberg.] The kingdom in the polls. Sifo, 1976-06.

<sup>2</sup> Yvonne Johansson & Mats Törngren. Carl Gustaf och Silvia - hur ska ni ha't? Journalistikhögskolan i Stockholm, ht 1975.

<sup>3</sup> Deland, Mats. Historien om en tysk nazist i Brasilien. Arbetaren, 2002:29.

<sup>4</sup> Jägerblom, Michael. Kungen och Silvia II. Vecko Journalen, 1976: 14 [förefaller baserad på ett samtal med kungen & Silvia].

<sup>5</sup> Artikelserie: Sanningen om Silvia Sommerlath. Året runt, 1976:20-26. [Baserad på en artikelserie i Münchentidningen BUNTE av Paul Sahner & Thomas Veszelits. München: Ferenez Verlag, 1976. Faktaunderlag av ytterligare 14 journalister som intervjuat ”hundratals människor” i Silvias omgivning om åren 1954-1972 och 1975.]

<sup>6</sup> P D Lindeberg. Unik intervju med drottning Silvia om kristen fostran. Växjöstifts hembyggskalender, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> Norbert Loh. Silvia von Schweden : eine deutsche Königin. Norbert Loh, 2003 [baserad på ett flertal intervjuer med Walther och Silvia Sommerlath].

<sup>8</sup> Christina Magnergård Bjers. Drottning Silvia. Ekerlids förlag, 2001 [baserad på intervjuer med Silvia m fl].

<sup>9</sup> Ulf B Nilson. Silvia, en artikelserie. Expressen, 1976-03-16 [baserad på en intervju med Walther Sommerlath].

<sup>10</sup> Ulf B Nilson,. Silvia, en artikelserie. Expressen, 1976-03-17 [baserad på intervjuer med två skolkamrater Ulrika Stage & Gisela Voss].

<sup>11</sup> Ulf B Nilson. Silvia, en artikelserie. Expressen, 1976-03-18 [baserad på intervjuer med tre arbetskamrater Jürgen Schröder, Carmen Möller & Ehrengard von Reden].

<sup>12</sup> Mats Deland & Fredrik Quistbergh. Kalla fakta. TV4, 2010-11-28 kl 19:20 & 2010-12-05 kl 19:20.

<sup>13</sup> Johan Åsard. Drottningens hemlighet. Ordfront, 2013.

Silvias father Carl August Walther Sommerlath (1901-1990) was born into a German middle-class family living on the outskirts of Heidelberg. His father was a businessman, importer and wholesaler in tobacco. His mother was a clergyman's daughter. Walther was the youngest of six siblings, the most notable being his brother Ernst (1889-1983), a theologian of the Lutheran Church. Walther attended high school. He had plans to become an officer, but the post-defeat peace conditions included the abolition of the German army.

In 1920, against his father's wishes, he moved to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where there was a large German colony and where he believed his economic prospects were better. The father gave him a start-up capital and told him to send a telegram if he needed a return ticket. Walther then worked hard for four years, allegedly touring Brazil while learning the country and the language. In early 1924 he met his future wife Alice Soares de Toledo (1906-1997) and proposed to her shortly thereafter. Walther's version was that a co-worker had invited two girls to join them. Silvia's version was more dramatic: That Walther and Alice met on the Copacabana beach when they together saved a little boy from drowning.

Although Alice come six months was already promised to somebody else, she broke of the connection. (Her parents do not seem to have protested against her decision. Although they had arranged the engagement themselves, Alice had for some reason never met her fiancé, only received his photograph. Walther also seemed to his parents as a better prospect.) However, there was to be no marriage until Walther could support his family. The following year, he worked for *Acus Roechling Boulerus do Brasil* in São Paulo. This was a subsidiary of the German steel company Röchling. Walther worked as a salesman of German steel, with time in increasingly responsible positions, and spent much of his time travelling. The wedding took place on Thursday, December 10, 1925, in Porto Feliz, where Alice's family owned a coffee plantation.

Alice belonged to what is regarded as the Brazilian upper class, descendants of Portuguese conquerors, indigenous Indians, and “Os Quatrocentões” (early colonists from 400 years back). The surname de Toledo is a 16th-century Spanish name with noble connotation's, but has never been traced back to any noble family. The prefix “de Toledo” only means that this branch of the family came from the city of Toledo, Brazil. Alice's father was a senator and owned a coffee plantation. His brothers were lawyers, doctors and civil engineers.

Like all plantation lasses of her time, Alice was a confusing mixture of the down-to-earth and of calculating class arrogance whose entire future depended on marrying well. For the family, she was at best a valuable asset in a marital jigsaw puzzle, at worst a financial burden. She and her seven siblings (four brothers and three sisters) had grown up surrounded by nannies, waitresses and other servants. Until puberty, she was free to roam. Then every step she took was monitored. She never received any education to speak about.

After the marriage, they first lived with Alice's parents in their São Paulo apartment, where Alice cared for her sick mother. This continued until her mother's death in early 1928. Then they were left to their own devices: Alice gave birth to two boys, Ralph (1930-) and Walther Ludwig (1934-). They visited Europe several times, both in connection with Walther's work and on holidays.

In December 1934, Walther joined the Nazi Party, which has generated much writing without clarifying the motives. Neither then nor later did he show any political interest, so the motive was probably to show his loyalty to Germany and to the company Röchling

whose leader Hermann Röchling was a well known Nazi. Alternatively, he followed the example of his brother Paul. Also he lived in Brazil and had joined the Nazi Party in 1933. This Brazil-German Nazi party and the developments in Europe alarmed the authorities to the extent that they launched a campaign against German culture in general, which involved closing German schools, and against the Brazilian Nazi party in particular, to prevent a feared Brazilian repeat *putsch*. In June 1937, Walther returned to Germany and installed his family with his brother Ernst. He then returned to Brazil to put his family's affairs in order. It appears to have involved settling issues of the inheritance after Alice's father. On November 30, he resigned from his job at Röchling with effect from February 28, 1938, but stayed on until June.

The Brazilian Nazi Party was banned May 1938, but by then the Sommerlath family was long installed in Heidelberg. Walther advertised for someone who wanted to buy what remained of his Brazilian property and got in touch with a Jewish businessman Efim Wechsler (1883-1962). The sale was delayed. After a few months, Walther moved to Völklingen, a steel district in Saarland on the border of France, where he worked for Röchling-Buderus for six months. At the outbreak of the war, all Röchling civilians were evacuated from Völklingen because it was in a war zone. After three months, they were allowed to move back, but by then, civilian steel production had been replaced by armaments production for the state. Walther, a salesman, had no place in the new organization. He moved to Berlin, where on May 24, 1939, he took over a small mechanical factory, Wechsler & Hennig, which Wechsler had been forced to sell because Jews had been banned from engaging in commercial activities. Wechsler subsequently moved to Brazil. On moving he was forcibly taxed and not allowed to bring more than RM10 (about SEK 350), but on arriving was allowed to keep Walther's remaining property in Brazil, part of a coffee plantation and three plots of land in São Paulo. According to one version, the estate gave Wechsler an entry visa and thus saved his life. According to another version, Wechsler received his entry visa several months before the purchase documents were signed and would thus have survived without Walther.<sup>14,15</sup>

It has been discussed whether Walther used Wechsler's emergency to get a good price. The company (assets minus liabilities) was valued at 58 thousand Mark, the plantation was valued at 25 thousand Mark, the company's annual profit was about six thousand Mark. There are two opposing camps: Those who believe that Walther made a profit of 130 percent and those who believe that the purchase price, four times the company's annual profit, was perfectly normal. There are also reports that the plantation was grossly overvalued and thus the deal from Walther's point of view was better than it appears. What speaks against Walther having taken advantage of Wechsler's emergency is that after the war Wechsler and his daughter had the opportunity to prosecute Walther but they never did. The lack of hard feelings suggests that the financial settlement was to Wechsler's advantage. He later opened a mechanical workshop so he did not end his life in misery.

Under Walther, the factory at its peak employed 38 people. Walther and family lived in a villa in Fridenau outside the city. When the Berlin surface bombing began in late 1943, Walther sent his eldest son Ralph to Denmark and Alice with the youngest son Walther jr to Heidelberg. He himself stayed in Berlin until 1945 when the factory burned down. In the beginning it manufactured electrical appliances such as hairdryers and even toys. Over time, it also became a subcontractor of filters for protective masks, parts for armoured vehicles, sights etc. His responsibility for the factory kept Walther out of military service. In Heidelberg, Alice

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<sup>14</sup> Arne Lapidus. "Jag visste inte att köparen var nazist". Expressen, 2010-12-06.

<sup>15</sup> Erik Norberg. En undersökning [om drottning Silvias far]. Version 4. 2011-12-10.

gave birth to two more children, Jörg (1942-2006) and Silvia Renate (1943-). She kept a low profile because in 1942 Brazil joined Germany's enemies. Walther commuted between Berlin and Heidelberg and was actually at home when Alice gave birth to Silvia. When the labours began, they went to a private maternity clinic nearby. Alice was later interviewed about Silvia's first time:<sup>16</sup> She weighed 3,680 grams and was breastfed for four months. When she was 7 ½ months old, she could say "Mom". When she was 13 months old, she could walk. When she was 1 ½ years old, she could utter whole sentences. Viz. a normal little girl. The name Silvia Renate came from two of Alice's brothers, Silvio and Renato.

Alice shared an apartment with another family. Heidelberg was never bombed but there were often air alarms. Alice, her two children and the other family spent the nights in the basement wrapped in blankets. It was freezing cold and food was scarce. The situation was such that she sank into a deep depression that around 1946 was treated with electric shocks. Silvia was afterwards convinced that it contributed to her mother's dementia.<sup>17</sup>

When the factory was destroyed on February 3, 1945, Walther lost all income. After the end of the war, he tried to rebuild it, but the machinery and tools had been removed by the Russians (the factory was located in East Berlin) and there was no demand for the products. The situation was obviously desperate, but no one in the family has wanted to tell how they managed. From friends of that time one gets the impression that they sold off the furniture, starved, indebted themselves and received help from Alice's family.

In 2017 some additional facts surfaced. At the end of the war Walther was active in a rescue operation of smuggling Jewish refugees to Sweden. He is supposed to have done it for the money. ["Mötet om Silvias pappas förflutna". Expressen 2017-07-29.]

The bright spot was that the Brazilian Nazi Party's membership list was astray. The family ended up in a detention camp, an old factory building in Bedberg in the British occupation zone, where there was a large group with Argentine and Brazilian connections. There he was joined by his eldest son, Ralph, who had walked on foot from Denmark. In 1946, Walther received a certificate from the occupying authorities that he was not a Nazi and was appointed spokesman for those who wanted to go home. Walther sent Ralph and a companion with a list of names to the Brazilian military attaché in Berlin, and the boys managed to deliver it to the relevant authorities suffering hardships in the process however. In early 1947, the Brazilian authorities sent a boat and the Sommerlaths moved back with the others. On March 1, 1947, they arrived in Rio de Janeiro after a 28-day journey.

The tickets were paid for by Alice's family, with in-laws and children now about 60 people. In the beginning Sommerlaths lived on her uncle's hacienda outside São Paulo. By this time, Röchling was no longer active. Walther initially worked for a company called Insubra which among others represented the Swedish company Uddeholm. The tasks varied and he travelled a lot. In 1949 Uddeholm started its own subsidiary Uddeholm do Brazil, abbreviated as UBRA, where Walther became CEO of the sales department. The family was back in the game.

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<sup>16</sup> Franz-Josef Wagner. [Intervju med Silvias mor i "Bild am Sonntag".] I: Svensk Damtidning, 1977:18.

<sup>17</sup> Tommy Schönstedt. "Elchockerna skadade mamma." Expressen, 2012-03-22.

They spent yet another ten years in Brazil. Silvia alternately staying at the family farm Fazenda Belmonte near Rio Claro, in São Domingos near Toledo-Paraná or in Alvejar near Cambara-Paraná (many versions) and at the family villa in São Paulo. Life in the countryside was mostly bright memories. The summer school break was three months. She became a skilled equestrian. They played tag on horseback and cowboys and Indians. She collected interesting stones that she cracked in search of rock crystals. They helped harvest coffee beans and dived into them in the drying barn. At its most, there were 37 cousins there at the same time, but normally they were about 20. Her uncle ran a school for the employees' children. Silvia sometimes helped out as a "mini-teacher".

The timing of her birthday, the day before Christmas Eve, was not so good why the birthday celebration was moved to July 23. When Jörg also started school, she felt lonely and nagged mom Alice about a little sister. Instead, she received a capuchin monkey as a playmate, whom she named Micki. Micki was a gift to her parents from a missionary who thanked them for providing their station in the Amazon with medicines. Micki was full of antics. He used to hide and then take a running jump nowhere to surprise her. Micki also made a mess. Silvia liked to tell of how it took them 14 days to clean up mother Alice's room after Micki having rummaged through her makeup stash.<sup>18</sup>

Walther was very attached to his daughter: "I don't know how many nights I've sat at Silvia's bedside and read her stories. All while she devotedly received every word. Eventually I went on to read aloud to her from other books - I still remember that she could never get enough of Robinson Crusoe. That interest in Robin Crusoe was probably her only boyish trait."<sup>19</sup> That Silvia never fought seems, however, to be a misunderstanding on Walther's part. Silvia's own version is:

I have three brothers, all older than me. I'm the youngest and only girl. My parents really took care not to make a difference between us. But still - I was a girl, I was the weakest. I was kept somewhere in the background. I argued a lot with my brother next in age [Jörg]. In fact, we often fought and he won. So one day I talked to my mom about this. She said: Try to understand him! Why use the same methods of violence as he does to get it what you want? Try another way instead!

My parents never interfered in our children's room fights, but this particular moment I remember. Try to understand why the other one acts as he does, why I act as I do myself. What are his arguments, which are mine? How can I make mine carry? Those thoughts have followed me through the years.<sup>20</sup>

After the anti-German campaign, German schools were scarce. Silvia first attended kindergarten. In 1950, she joined the former German girls school Colegio Viscondo de Porto Seguro, now co-ed and bilingual, Portuguese and German. Much like at home where she spoke German with dad and Portuguese with mom. (Alice had learned some German on her own, but her grammar and pronunciation was shoddy.) The school's foreign language teaching began early and included Latin, French, and English. She received extra lessons in German every week. The pedagogy consisted of rote learning. The penalty for failure was copying 10 pages of glosses. Silvia used a type writer - not so popular. A lot of people

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<sup>18</sup> Svensk Damtidning, 1977:1.

<sup>19</sup> Svensk Damtidning, 1978:36. [Intervju med Walther Sommerlath.]

<sup>20</sup> Elisabeth Frankl. Strängt personligt: Silvia – här berättar hon öppet om sig själv och sitt nya liv. Expressen, 1977-05-19.

skipped school, but she didn't. Her best subject was music, the other grades were plain. Her parents made her take extra lessons in playing the accordion. "At first I thought it was disgusting but then I felt excited even though my game was very uneven."<sup>21</sup> The accordion lessons soon ended. Her other leisure activities were drawing and handicraft. She must also have taken dance lessons.

The primary task of the school seems to have been domesticating brats. The Principal: "It was a school of hard knocks and quasi military discipline."<sup>22</sup> The school did not encourage independent thought. However, there is a funny story from when Silvia was 11 years old:

At the time we had homework assignments. I [one of Silvia's classmates] no longer remember the subject and why Silvia, who was a good student, had not done her homework.

Now the teachers used to let some of us read their essay in class before collecting them for grading the next day. Silvia had of course intended to write her essay by then, but she was unlucky, she was the first to be called up to read it.

Knowing that she had written nothing, I was stiff with surprise when Silvia, without batting an eyelid, took her essay book, rose and began reading her essay, fluent and in elegant style. The teacher nodded pleasantly. Silvia had once again documented her writing skills.

She had come almost to the end, when the teacher suddenly did not hear her. He asked her to repeat the last sentence. Silvia turned back flipped some pages at random, but was abandoned by the gods. She lost her way, started to stutter, the whole thing fell apart. No wonder - when the teacher asked to see what she had written, he found only empty white sheets. Silvia had recited her perhaps best essay ever straight out of her head.<sup>23</sup>

Silvia's own school memories were about bullying:

I went to school in Brazil, in a class with both boys and girls. The boys were so much louder and stronger than us girls. There was a constant power play between us, and I have clear memories of that, especially of how they treated a girl. I will never forget. She was not very beautiful, and not very good at school. And she also had a hard time at home, especially with her dad - and we all knew that.

First the boys rejected her, and then it automatically became so that the girls did the same. I was 11-12 years old then, I remember how I reacted. That I tried to get her back into the group. [It was me against all the others. She finally got accepted again and it felt good. It was a difficult time.<sup>24</sup>] I have not been able to forget what happened. If one group, boys in this case, offend a human being, why should another follow suit and do the same? What exactly happened? I thought about it a lot in the years that followed.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Jägerblom. Silvia besvarar läsarnas frågor. Året Runt, 1993:51.

<sup>22</sup> Håkan Mattson. Med Silvia i Brasilien. Expressen, 1984-04-05.

<sup>23</sup> Artikelserie: Sanningen om Silvia Sommerlath. Året runt, 1976, nr 20-26.

<sup>24</sup> Stina Dabrowski. Stina möter Silvia. SVT1, "20:00 Special", 1986-06-19, kl 20:00-21:00.

<sup>25</sup> Elisabeth Frankl. Strängt personligt: Silvia – här berättar hon öppet om sig själv och sitt nya liv. Expressen, 1977-05-19.

By then, Silvia had arrived at puberty and had to accept the constant supervision of her father and brothers whether it was taking a walk, cinema, dancing or regattas. Over time, she learned how to handle it. Silvia had an official private life and a secret private life. The surveillance was somewhat relaxed when the two eldest brothers disappeared to Germany for further schooling. Silvia claimed afterwards that they were “jealous, envious or however else to express it,”<sup>26</sup> for all the attention she received. A check of which years it took place shows that it must have been Walther jr who was responsible for most of the surveillance. The relationship between him and Silvia seems never to have fully recovered.

The films often featured Hollywood star Linda Christian. Silvia interest was such that she was even called Linda by her classmates. Linda had a background that probably appealed to Silvia. Her father was in the oil business and ambulated around the world. Linda came to master seven languages, before her acting career attended university courses, and was well known for her marriage to Tyrone Powers. In addition, she was the world's first Bond girl in the TV version of Casino Royal.

Silvia claimed to have learned much from her mother, her way of leading her family through difficulties and problems, without them noticing how it was done. There were rarely conflicts in the family and those who her mother quickly quashed. Alice's advice to her daughter was “Never go to bed like enemies”. - “She is a skilled diplomat. She did not compromise for the sake of compromise,” Silvia said afterwards. It was strategic perseverance. “When I was little, my mother told me about two frogs, who happened to fall into a bowl of milk. One quickly realizes that there was no salvation. He just lets go - and drowns. That is the pessimist. The other, on the other hand, does not give in, he kicks and kicks and finally the milk becomes butter - and so he jumps out!”<sup>27</sup> - “She describes her parents as separate two worlds. The father was the more authoritarian, the mother was soft and more tolerant, and they complemented each other very well. - Someone once said that my father was the head, while my mother was the neck that turned the head...”<sup>28</sup>

In the autumn of 1957 Walther was promoted to sales manager at Uddeholm's Germany branch in Düsseldorf. The Sommerlaths once again pitched their tent where the grazing was good. By now they felt as world citizens or rootless cosmopolitans with all that implies. Family was all. Silvia's farewell from her schoolmates was emotional. She was celebrated with a samba party. The class also followed her to the airport and waved her off. Walther wanted to mitigate the cultural shock of moving through a long journey: ”We travelled all over South America, Haiti, Havana, Yukatan and Acapulco - then New York, London, Paris, Stockholm, Heidelberg... altogether the trip certainly took some two months.”<sup>29</sup> Walther claimed that they actually visited Stockholm Castle but that it was closed for tourists.

Upon arrival, Silvia was entered into a Lutheran boarding school, Elisabeth von Thadden Schule, to learn German pronunciation and to be out of the way. There she spent just under two terms, seven or eight months, and obviously thought the change of environment very exciting. Since the school was located in Heidelberg, there were plenty of relatives to visit and she had much to catch up on. For example, she had read the history of the Aztecs and the Incas, but nothing about the history of Europe. The Pedagogy was based on project work,

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<sup>26</sup> Stefan Mehr. Intervju med drottning Silvia. MånadsJournalen, 1993:12.

<sup>27</sup> Omar Magnergård & Anna Lena Wik-Thorsell. 50-årsdagen närmar sig. Svenska Dagbladet, 1993-12-19.

<sup>28</sup> Helena Wiklund. Drottning Silvia i öppen hjärtig intervju. Svensk Damtidning, 1993:49.

<sup>29</sup> Elisabeth Reich. Intervju med Walther Sommerlath. Året Runt, 1976:49.

quite different from what she was used to and very demanding. "She was a very intelligent and very ambitious student. Maybe she was a bit too lively when arriving, because she was hot tempered and used to the more liberal and boisterous environment from her school in Brazil."<sup>30</sup> She did not live at home but at a student dorm "Park Haus" on the school grounds. Four girls in the same room. There are reports that she had some difficulty in adapting. Since those responsible refused to disclose to journalists who were her classmates, it was never investigated. Maybe she was bullied. She wasn't like the others. From Brazil she was accustomed to unannounced visits and found it unnatural with the German ritual of first making a call.

Silvia was also to be prepared for her confirmation. The Sommerlath family was proud of their religious tolerance. However, this seems to have largely consisted in avoiding taking a stand. The four children Sommerlath belonged to the Protestant Church but also visited the Catholic Mass with their mother. This continued in Germany. Mostly like as a formality. Silvia later claimed that Alice had been expelled from the Catholic Church because she had not had her children baptized Catholic. Difficult to judge. It was probably the milder degree of prohibition on accepting communion - but that could be lifted if showing remorse.

Silvia's Christian education was so neglected that she received supplementary education to catch up. She did not take communion until 15, two years later than usual. She later agreed that it was rather late, but, she added, if you mature late you do. Nothing to do about. (More recent data rather suggests an identity crisis in the years 1957-1959. She went through a period of questioning her self: "Why am I here?" - "What am I doing here?". The answers, as far as such questions can be answered, she seems to have received in discussions with her schoolmates, with her parents and at the confirmatory education. Maybe it coincided with a teenage rebellion. She thought her teachers and parents decided too much about her. That her path had been marked out by others. She felt trapped. Sometimes literally because her parents didn't let her out. She longed for the summer holidays on horseback in Brazil.<sup>31</sup>) Nor does Alice seem to have enjoyed her new homeland, far away from family, friends and acquaintances. She often visited her old homeland and accompanied her husband, perhaps the reason why Silvia's brothers had so large a part in her upbringing. Her health was shaky. She had trouble with her heart. One version is that the family moved to Germany because she was no longer able to withstand the Brazilian heat.

In high school, Silvia attended the municipal girls' school Luisenschule in her home town Düsseldorf. A practical social education line for budding mothers. The main subjects were language, music and child education. She spoke good German with a piquant dialect but the spelling was still bad. She also studied English and French. The school organized collections for worthy purposes. In one case to a convalescent home for mothers. Silvia talked herself into a luxury restaurant where her Portuguese impressed a company of tourists. There was a lot of money in the collection box.

The studies included two months of internship in nursing homes, where they saw how to give birth, and the same in an orphanage for children with developmental disabilities. She had good savoir-faire. At home, she exercised her knowledge on her god daughter, Ralph's daughter Carmita, who occasionally stayed with Silvia's parents. She also had a special eye for a nearby kindergarten. "There were children with difficult home conditions, children who were discordant and broken and needed someone who took their time with them. After ending

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<sup>30</sup> Bo Hanson. Nu blir det dragspel på slottet. Allers, 1974:11.

<sup>31</sup> Christina Magnergård. Drottning Silvia : hennes egen berättelse. TV4, 1998. [Intervju med drottning Silvia.]



her of her working hours, Silvia used to stay, read with the children, talk to them, try to instil in them a little of the love, warmth and care she herself had experienced. In particular, Silvia took to her heart a little boy who happened to be sickly fat. He found himself excluded from all companionship, always alone and sad, and Silvia was perhaps the first adult to fully indulge him. Almost daily she used to take that boy home to her parents, sit with him in her room, and try to give him a little confidence.”<sup>32,33</sup> Because his teacher neglected him he could not even write properly. Silvia trained him as best he could. She practised at a Montessori school. For a while she considered such a career but the language studies intervened.

Walther's business acquaintances had a very positive impression of the family: “They are both [Walther and Alice] unusually nice companions. I had the most contact with Alice Sommerlath who used to follow her husband to Sweden.”<sup>34</sup> - Silvia was in Sweden in 1952, the summers of 1958-60 and before Walther's retirement in 1967 (he retired in 1968). “[Her daughter] Silvia was really an unusual girl, completely unlike everyone else. Exceptionally well-behaved, polite and charismatic. She charmed everyone right from the start.”<sup>35</sup> Silvia's brother Walther jr thought it ran in the family: “Silvia is like mother in appearance and also in manner. She is lively and temperamental, but also very restrained.”<sup>36</sup> School friend Edna Läschenal: “We used to sit quite amazed and listen to Silvia when she came home in the autumn after the summer holidays in Sweden. For those of us who lived in a hard, noisy, dirty industrial city, it sounded like a dream to hear about her adventures in thick forests, among cows and horses and how she bathed in clear blue sea water. Silvia learned Swedish relatively well and used to tease with us by speaking Swedish when she would tell secrets.”<sup>37</sup>

Silvia also displayed temper and fairness: “When some teacher subjected herself - or some classmate - to unfair treatment, her Southern temperament emerged at full force. - She was really capable of exploding, says Beate [Middelschulte] and laughs. Smoke came through her ears.”<sup>38</sup> School friend Edna Lüschenal: “I remember Silvia as an unusually frisky and fun girl. She had a hard time sitting still, things would always happen. Silvia was really different from the rest of us. We went to a very prestigious school with almost only family girls. Silvia was a bit like 'a black sheep'. She could swear and speak her mind, we would never have dared to do so. Oh, what a temper she had. She once scolded her history teacher for questioning Germany's guilt in World War II. The teacher wondered if she was not German herself, but then Silvia replied that she was a citizen of the world, I remember that as if it was yesterday.”<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps this was when the school showed a film about Anne Frank. Probably George Stevens' 1959 version starring Millie Perkins. The film sparked controversy, and Simon Wiesenthal has said that he was visiting schools at the time and even managed to convince an incredulous school class that the Jewish persecution had taken place by finding the policeman who revealed Anne Frank's hiding place to the Germans.

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<sup>32</sup> Kristina Walden, Intervju med Silvias bästa väninna Beate Middelschulte. *Hemmets Journal*, 1976:16.

<sup>33</sup> *Svensk Damtidning*, 1978:36. [Intervju med Silvias barndomsvän Beate Middelschulte.]

<sup>34</sup> *Svensk Damtidning*, 1976:13. [Intervju med Anne-Marie Druid, gift med försäljningschefen Olle Druid i Uddeholm AB.]

<sup>35</sup> *Svensk Damtidning*, 1976:13. [Intervju med Anne-Marie Druid, gift med försäljningschefen Olle Druid i Uddeholm AB.]

<sup>36</sup> *Svensk Damtidning*, 1976:13. [Intervju med Walther Sommerlath jr.]

<sup>37</sup> Sten Hedman. *Det började med ett möte på flygplatsen. Damernas Värld*, 1976:10.

<sup>38</sup> Kristina Walden, Intervju med Silvias bästa väninna Beate Middelschulte. *Hemmets Journal*, 1976:16.

<sup>39</sup> Sten Hedman. *Det började med ett möte på flygplatsen. Damernas Värld*, 1976:10.

Home monitoring continued to be intense. Her brothers studied in Berlin but were at home over the weekends so that they could follow her to and from dances, films, theatre and opera. By 10 o'clock she would be home. The Sommerlath family had completely missed this with modern child-rearing and freedom with responsibility. Two classmates described the situation. "She actually had it quite difficulties sometimes. She was so completely different, so much harder held and a little outside the gang. Perhaps this is precisely why we all felt sorry for her and wanted to help her - especially with the German. ... Luisenschule was petty-bourgeois to the hilt. None of us so much as looked at a lipstick and we dressed like little nuns. Silvia was undoubtedly the most naive and most inexperienced of us all - she did not even understand how beautiful she herself was. ... Silvia loved dancing. But since she never got to dance with boys - during high school at least - she always put on records when we girls visited her and we danced. We finally thought it silly, because we ourselves had started dancing with boys. ... The difference between her and a normal Swedish woman of the same age is so great that you probably cannot even grasp it."<sup>40,41</sup> This seems to be something of an exaggeration. According to other sources, Silvia was frequently courted when attending parties and there were many trips abroad. In winter ski resorts, in summer beach resorts. She visited Berlin. Dad Walther was worried she'd fall asleep on the subway and end up in East Berlin. In the summer of 1961 she was in London on school exchange. "During these visits abroad, Silvia also met the 'right' people." She was a member of the exclusive tennis club Rochus. She was sought after as a mixed-partner. In São Paulo, she had never been to the theatre or opera, but she made up for in high school. She received piano lessons. She took care of the flower beds in the family garden. She drew and took an interest furnishing in all its guises. For a while she wanted to become an interior architect. As a source of income she took care of neighbouring children.

Silvia's parents made short thrift of their neighbours. They probably did not think they had much in common with them. Sommerlaths saw themselves as a bourgeois nobility. They had a better economy: a villa with their own garden, a lot of household appliances etc. Walther was rarely at home and Alice stayed away. Silvia's brothers, on the other hand, were omnipresent and followed her wherever she went. She was not even allowed to sunbathe in the garden without one of the brothers sitting next to watch her. Silvia had difficulty deciding which of her parents was the hardest. Walther was strict in German. Alice in Brazilian. Both had a guilty conscience afterwards. Alice seems to have hoped for a "Brazilian" wedding. However, her daughter seems to have had her doubts. Perhaps not about marriage as such but definitely about women's rights within the "Brazilian" marriage. The classmates had many heated discussions with her to instil some Germanic female power into their "Brazilian princess". Silvia has since denied that she was some kind of feminist. Maybe so. But she has definitely been affected by it.

The siblings kept in touch even after everyone left home. At times, the brothers called her daily from their work in Brussels, Paris and Cologne. When they met, they had a lot of fun. All were musical, especially the middle brother Walther jr who according to Silvia could play anything on any instrument, and they entertained each other with singing and games. Silvia's early birthday, 23 July, was celebrated with songs and gifts, a Portuguese version of "Happy birthday". Later they sang it on the phone "Parabens a você, nesta data feliz ...". A big birthday cake was mandatory. Their "Kätchen" (pussycat) was always thoroughly celebrated. However, their relationship never seems to have been about intellectual discussions or personal trust. The Sommerlaths never discussed religion, politics, culture or love. Everything was wired with explosives.

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<sup>40</sup> Ulf Nilson. Silvia, en artikelserie. Expressen, 1976-03-17. [Intervju med klasskamraten Ulrika Stage.]

<sup>41</sup> Ulf Nilson. Silvia, en artikelserie. Expressen, 1976-03-18. [Intervju med klasskamraten Gisela Voss.]

Schoolmates have told that Silvia was fascinated by Princess Elisabeth of Austria-Hungary and her fate. Probably because of the extremely popular films about her at this time with Romy Schneider in the lead as “Sissi”. On a school trip to Vienna in 1962, the class visited the Imperial Palace and Silvia stood completely spellbound in front of the princess' portrait. It is difficult to understand Silvia's later relationship with CG and the Swedish people without this common background of media “princess dreams”.

At school, Silvia was primarily interested in languages. However, it was also passed in mathematics, physics and chemistry. For a while she was in charge of the physics hall. Her 1963 student grades were average, just over 3 on a scale 1-6. In the orals, Silvia was quizzed in her worst subject, which was German. She had to recite a Goethe poem and then analyse it. The audience was 30 teachers and censors. It was absolutely terrible. Afterwards, all the newly hatched students went to the pastry shop, all 11 of them, had coffee and cried with relief between pastries. “We were 19 years old, but childish as 12-year-olds,” a classmate commented long after. The local newspaper Rheinische Post interviewed them about what profession they had in mind. Nine wanted to be teachers, among them Silvia. We'll never know more than that. Silvia seems to have contacted all her former teachers and classmates and asked them to keep quiet about her schooling, her grades and everything else.

After graduation, Silvia spent eight months in Brazil. In Brazil, she lived with her aunt Nadyr de Toledo Braga in São Paulo and with her cousin Marilla Braga de Toledo in the beach resort Guarujá outside Santos. These recruited a number of cavaliers who were both nice, good looking and had money but Silvia was uninterested. It seemed to her relatives that she was waiting for someone special, unclear who. It is also unclear what she was doing there.

Cousin Marilla: There was something completely distinct about her even when she was a little girl. She was so incredibly cute and loving - “amorosa” as we say here in Brazil. But at the same time so serious, so concentrated. But it was in the correct manner without for a moment sacrificing her femininity, and I am not saying this because she is my cousin and one of my dearest friends. It is simply that Silvia is a unique personality, perhaps due to her mixture of German brain and discipline on the one hand and Brazilian sweetness and heart - “coração” - on the other. We believe that intellect and discipline are traits that the Swedish people already know and respect. Nor do we doubt that the Swedes are a people with heart and feeling. But “coração” is something else, something very special, a warmth in the personality born from our sunny climate. Silvia has that warmth, and we hope that the Swedish people will love her for it...<sup>42</sup>

What happened after her return is also unclear. She entered a household school. During the summer, she took a holiday in Mallorca with some friends. Maybe Dad Walther then issued an ultimatum:

Personally, I am an extremely independent person and I have been honoured to bring up my children to be as completely independent as possible. I have always told Silvia that only she can shape her own life. Not least when it comes to love.

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<sup>42</sup> Margareta Hernberg. Hemma hos Silvias släkt i Brasilien. Husmodern, 1976:17.

[My wife had no vocational training] but when it comes to my daughter Silvia and her future, I have always been very firm. I told her that I thought it best for a girl to get a good education. You never know anything about tomorrow.<sup>43</sup>

In the autumn of 1964 she moved with her parents' permission to Munich where she attended a course in business correspondence, stenography etc. She was intrinsic with acquaintances, a family Blase, which Dad Walther hoped was a guarantee that she behaved. In 1965, she enrolled in Spanish at the Dolmetsch Institute in Munich, a private pre-vocational language school, according to an unverified account on the advice of her brother Walther, who was also very linguistically gifted. The school taught German as a foreign language and English, French, Spanish and Italian. The training lasted four years and seems to have been for a job as a translator, hotel hostess or in the travel agency industry. She was advised not to continue with a course for simultaneous interpretation which would have been the fifth and final year. (It would have meant simultaneous interpretation between two for her foreign languages. Silvia was never completely comfortable with German.) Part of the teaching took place in Spain in Alicante and Barcelona.

From 1967 Silvia shared a two-bedroom, 70 m<sup>2</sup> for 300 DMK, at Ainmillerstrasse in the centre of the city with two more students. One of them economics student Antje Albrecht: "Silvia became our cook. To this day, Antje's mouth waters when recollecting Silvia's Chinese dishes with sweet-sour sauce "which of course we ate with sticks". - We sat in oriental fashion on the floor. Unforgettable is a party arranged by Silvia. She made little men out of oranges and on them wrote the boys' names on small shields and when you lifted the shields you found the girls' names. When these placement cards were issued, Silvia served us all in an oriental suit. It was so typical of her."<sup>44</sup> Silvia was also good at paella with mussels. She came up with a lot of recipes for mussels. Probably because they were so cheap that she had them daily. The apartment lacked central heating so it was cold in winter. They went to bed early, pulled the blanket over and talked.

The information about Silvia's interest in clothing differs. She seems to have been something of a bourgeois bohemian, handsomely dressed at work, relaxed outside. "Silvia has never been a "typical modern student' in jeans and pullover. ... She always wears coats and furs. Something sporty, elegant and expensive."<sup>45</sup> Her jeans clothes were happy to be upstaged with happy embroidery. Towards the end of her studies, Silvia took on a lot of extra jobs as a hostess at fairs, fashion weeks and congresses to finance her wardrobe and holidays.

After graduating in 1969, she spent time in London and Spain to improve her pronunciation. She worked as an interpreter at various congresses. It is reported that she briefly served as a flight attendant on routes to South, Central and North America or travelled in the service. This has not been verified. It may have been a mix-up with the 1957 long-distance journey. In early 1970, she joined the Argentine Consulate in Munich. The payment was admittedly poor, 1500 SEK/month, but she lived cheaply = crowded, Silcherstrasse 8 in the northern part of the city, Schwabing, a crypt of 35 m<sup>2</sup> including kitchenette and even managed to save money. It sufficed for a driving license and a used Volkswagen. Her boss at the consulate, Carmen Möller, recommended that Silvia seek anything but office work. "Silvia was not suitable for office work. She could not sit still, so I always told her to get representational work among

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<sup>43</sup> Elisabeth Reich. Intervju med Walther Sommerlath. Året Runt, 1976:49.

<sup>44</sup> Artikelserie: Sanningen om Silvia Sommerlath. Året runt, 1976:20-26.

<sup>45</sup> Artikelserie: Sanningen om Silvia Sommerlath. Året runt, 1976:20-26.

people.”<sup>46</sup> The Consul had a relaxed view of the business. There were many nice lunches. Möller regretted that she did keep the pictures that showed her and Silvia driving the Consul around in a wheelbarrow during the October party in 1970.

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Silvia has, to the best of her ability, obscured her 10 years following her high school diploma. There are rumours of her love affairs during this time. Her first known relationship was with Baron Gerd von Brandenstein, a friend of the Blase family, who studied economics. He and Silvia had a discreet long distance relationship between 1965 and 1967 when it expired. The cause seems to have been that Silvia lived in Munich and Brandenstein in Frankfurt. A distance of more than 300 kilometres. Then he moved to Bochum which increased the distance to more than 600 kilometres. Her second relationship was with budding lawyer Michael Hahn whom she knew since earlier. It lasted from 1967 to 1970. Hahn explained the break by saying, “We were a little too different. Silvia wanted to settle down. I wanted to play the field.”<sup>47</sup> A later version was that “Silvia needed time [to find] herself”.<sup>48</sup> Her third relationship 1970-1973 was with lawyer Wolf Auler. According to an unconfirmed report, they were engaged and about to be married. After Silvia met CG, the relationship cooled significantly but continued.

At the time of graduation, Silvia was romantically inclined but inexperienced. A classmate: “The Silvia I knew at 19 is would never flirt with anyone.”<sup>49</sup> Mom Alice was asked “Have you given your daughter a sex education?” and answered “No. We never talked about that. I'm sure she found out what she knows in books. She has never asked me about such things.”<sup>50</sup> There is a persistent rumour of a courtship from brother Jörg's classmate ice hockey player Jürgen Breidenbach that possibly ended in Silvia becoming pregnant, but it has never been confirmed.

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Silvia's work at the consulate led to an interest in the upcoming Olympic Games that would take place in Munich between 26 August and 10 September 1972. “The consul's German was so bad that Silvia had to accompany and interpret during the preparations for Argentina's participation in Munich in 1972.”<sup>51</sup> Silvia's neighbour Jürgen Schröder was legal counsel for the local Olympic Committee. At a reception at the consulate, he introduced her to the chairman of the German Olympic Organizing Committee Willie Daume. Silvia asked him afterwards if it was a good idea for her to seek employment. Schröder replied that she should certainly do so.

The organizing committee estimated that 1,648 hostesses were needed in various functions. It was advertised. Up to March 1971, there were 8000 candidates for the posts. About one third of the applicants were from Munich. Silvia was hired in March or April 1971 at Section IX B “Hostesses and visitors service”. The head of the division was Austrian former skiing ace frau Doctor Emmy Schwabe. The job requirements were to master two or more languages in addition one's own, look proper and behave nicely. It appears to have been a short-term

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<sup>46</sup> Husmodern, 1976:18.

<sup>47</sup> Artikelserie: Sanningen om Silvia Sommerlath. Året runt, 1976:20-26.

<sup>48</sup> Erling Skaget & Henry Sidoli. Drottning Silvias ungdomskärlek tog sitt liv. Se & Hör, 1995:24.

<sup>49</sup> Intervju med klasskamraten Ulrika Stage. Husmodern, 1976:18.

<sup>50</sup> Franz-Josef Wagner. [Intervju med Silvias mor i “Bild am Sonntag”.] I: Svensk Damtidning, 1977:18.

<sup>51</sup> Svensk Damtidning, 1975:51/52.

contract being responsible for a seating section one month during the Olympics. She was soon found to be overqualified. After a few weeks, she was instead employed as one of 14 chief hostesses. The chairman of the German Olympic Committee, Willie Daume, later stated that he hired her directly from the dance floor. "She was hired as a hostess, but it wasn't long before we discovered what a great asset she was, and so she moved to my office and became chief hostess and then my personal deputy. For that task, she was perfect. Her looks and charm, her education and great language skills - she speaks five languages fluently! - made her as cut and dried for the work."<sup>52</sup>

Silvia had ended up in a place that suited her to perfection. She relaxed, which for Silvia meant painting, cultivating her interest in music and cooking. She played the guitar and sang, mainly German and French lieds and chants, and was good enough to entertain her circle of friends. When she danced, she liked samba and cha-cha-cha best. When listening, she preferred Beethoven, Mozart and Chopin. The cooking was Chinese and Brazilian, sometimes French. For parties it was spicy Brazilian stews with meat and corn. She was modest with the liquor, preferably some white wine of German variety. (Mostly it was orange juice.) No cigarettes. Never any weight problems. Her economy also allowed her trips to Italy, France and Switzerland. This appears to have involved sailing, water skis, swimming, sunbathing, hiking, mountaineering and downhill skiing. She learned alpine skiing at the age of 17. She knew the basics but no more and took great risks to keep up with the others. She had good skin and was usually so tanned that makeup was not needed. She enjoyed strolling around in the shopping districts. On rare occasions, she was seen with a cigarillo.

The Olympic leadership consisted almost exclusively of middle-aged and upward gentlemen. Emmy Schwabe was the only woman. The hostess was seen as a temporary profession on the way to marriage. It was stipulated in the contract that they would be dismissed if they married during their period of employment. They were treated accordingly. A mixture of fatherly condescension and appreciation of their sassy appearance. Silvia's actions the next five years must be interpreted in that light: "We really wanted to be taken seriously as professionals. We wanted our work to be respected as a real job, not just as some kind of light hearted pastime. In interviews and TV we emphasized these points of view and eventually we also gained greater respect."<sup>53</sup>

Silvia frequently visited her parents in Düsseldorf and after her father's pension in 1968 in Heidelberg. Mom Alice's heart troubles made her tired and Silvia helped out as best she could over the weekends, cleaned, bought food etc. Dad Walther inquired about her private life without getting much wiser. It was secret, secret. The German newspapers later put great efforts into finding these secrets but with little result. The affair with ice hockey player Jürgen Breidenbach was denied by all. The papers managed to find a photo of Silvia and a male acquaintance who had breakfast together. This caused Walther to reluctantly admit that a love, perhaps even a brief relationship, could have existed if not with this nice young man. Jürgen Schröder, a neighbour, remarked that Silvia was not a member of a Nunnery, but that he didn't keep tabs on her love life. Ehrengard von Reden, a friend and colleague, doubted there were any secrets. True, Silvia was irresistible, she was also incredibly reserved and liked to work better than to socialize. The gossip, however, said differently: "I lived for a few years in the United States and was then a member of an international club. There a German told me that she lived in the same house in Munich, I think it was, as Silvia did before she met the king. The apartments were very small and occupied by singles. The smallest apartment on top of

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<sup>52</sup> Bo Hansson. Allers utsända genom "järnridån". Allers, 1974:10. [Intervju med Willie Daume.]

<sup>53</sup> Kerstin Vinterhed. Intervju med Silvia. Dagens Nyheter, 1979-12-23.

the house belonged a certain Silvia. She spent time with the others in the house but was rather reserved. She had a relationship with a married man who had a son. When Silvia met the king she broke up with the man [and] with the son and no one of her acquaintances in the house was invited to the wedding in Sweden. That's the way the cookie crumbles.”<sup>54</sup>

Silvia's work as chief hostess included administering the hiring of the Olympic hostesses. They wanted ambitious applicants and the right language mix. They also arranged for the Olympic hostesses' work uniform, a perhaps not entirely successful combination of turquoise suit and white knee stockings. To be worn at the opening and closing ceremonies, various Bavarian village costumes were chosen. Public relations activities were extensive. Silvia was photographed for the Swiss newspaper Mosaic as an example of an Olympic hostess. She was supposed to be good advertising for a free, peaceful Germany far from the 1936 Olympics. “Silvia often came to the office,” says his [the owner of the photo firm Eruin Schneggs] assistant Anita Gässler. She was very curious about her pictures.”<sup>55</sup> Schnegg had agreed with Silvia that she would write a book on the training of the Olympic hostesses. She would also write the captions. However, Silvia was considered by Emmy Schwabe to be too low-ranking to be entrusted with the work.

Silvia also conducted public relations in other ways. “One of the Queen's habits during the Olympic period was to visit the quaint Russian hermit Väterchen Timofej to counterbalance her heated work. He had himself built a church near where the Olympic Stadium was then built. 4-5 days before the Olympics, Silvia wanted to give him a birthday present. A small delegation went there with tickets for the opening and some contests. Väterchen Timofej and his wife Natasha offered coffee and cakes.”<sup>56</sup>

The Chief hostesses also administered the Olympic hostess' training program. In addition to being useful in 1001 ways, they would be responsible for security and information. Their training consisted of Olympic history, knowledge of Munich and parts of a combined tourist, air and hotel hosting training. As the Summer Olympics approached, Silvia was so becoming so accustomed to it all that she allowed herself to make fun of particularly distressing visitors:

Silvia is an expert in imitating people, says Ehrengard von Reden. If she was just a ltad meaner, she could perform in a revue. When we colleagues felt tired and worked out and wanted some encouragement, we always asked her to imitate one or other of the high animals she has cared for.<sup>57</sup>

In the second week of May, Silvia advanced to Chief Assistant for Dr. Willi Daume, who had a staff of 20 people “for whom she was the spider in the web”. Silvia stepped in where it was needed, as an interpreter and as anything else possible. There were always plenty of odd jobs. On request, Daume did in fact express a modicum of criticism. Silvia was sometimes absent minded, easily forget names and wrote everything down on reminders that she forgot where she had. But he also saw something else: A mixture of softness and authority. Actor Jack Nicholson has put it this way when describing his co-star Jessica Lange: “She's a cross between deer and Buick.” Daume claimed that he had hired her on her looks, but that is debatable: “Fräulein Sommerlath was among the elite of the staff. Olympic director Willi

<sup>54</sup> Flashback. Den stora skvallertråden om H.M. Konung Carl XVI Gustaf. ”Snusse”, #607, 2008-06-25.

<sup>55</sup> Husmodern, 1976:18.

<sup>56</sup> Christina Magnergård. Drottning Silvia : hennes egen berättelse. Film, 1998. [Intervju med Jürgen Schröder.]

<sup>57</sup> Nilsson, B Ulf. Silvia, en artikelserie. Expressen, 1976-03-19 [baserad på intervjuer med tre arbetskamrater Jürgen Schröder, Carmen Möller & Ehrengard von Reden].

Daume took her to a congress in Luxembourg. She was noticed. Through her firm behaviour, her expertise, her logical arguments and her femininity, she charmed everyone.”<sup>58</sup> Dad Walther: “I think Silvia has a rather unusual ability to make people respect her - a quality that certainly helped her in several situations. She does it just by her way of being - I don't know how. She behaves correctly, she shows what she wants in terms of the work - but she does it in an extremely nice way and how should I express it sympathetically. She almost always gets her way. That I know this because that's how she treats me.”<sup>59</sup> Other appealing qualities were her wit and good judgement. A friend: “I don't think I've ever met anyone who so much possesses the ability to say the right thing to the right person in every situation.”<sup>60</sup> Someone had once seen her taming a furious South American sports leader in two minutes just by sweet smiles and well-chosen words. She had also learned to keep a professional distance, a necessary trait for hostesses, beautiful or not.

On Saturday, August 26, 1972, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the inauguration would begin. One of the invited guests was missing. Silvia went on a quest for Ethiopian runner Abebe Bikila, who won the gold medal in the 1960 Olympic marathon. He was now confined to a wheelchair after a road accident and, as the stadium was not handicapped accessible, he had not been able to reach the seats. Silvia found him at one of the portals in the Olympic stage. Task completed Silvia was on her way back to her place at the vip stand when she felt watched..

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<sup>58</sup> Artikelserie: Sanningen om Silvia Sommerlath. Året runt, 1976:20-26.

<sup>59</sup> Elisabeth Reich. Intervju med Walther Sommerlath. Året Runt, 1976:49.

<sup>60</sup> Svenska Dagbladet, 1976-03-19.